Bella Coola Indians - Chapter VIII

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Death is marked by even more complicated and prolonged rites than marriage. Like so many primitive peoples, the Bella Coola carry out elaborate rituals soon after the actual decease, and also hold lengthy commemmorative and mourning ceremonials in later years. As these require the co-operation of a large number of people, the death of an individual affects a wider circle than his own relatives, and the celebrations have, therefore, an important social as well as religious significance.

berty is no more than a mark of increasing age and strength. Marriage is delayed as a rule for several years until a youth indicates his fitness for the responsibility.

DEATH.

It has been possible to describe Birth and Adolescence somewhat briefly, but greater detail is required for Death, the final point in a man's existence. Like so many primitive peoples, the Bella Coola not only carry out elaborate ceremonials soon after the actual decease, but also hold complicated rites of commemmoration and mourning in later years. These require the active co-operation of a large number of people, so that the death of an individual affects a wider circle than his own relatives. Death ceremonials have, therefore, important social as well as religious significances.

Omens of Death.

It is not surprising that the Bella Coola, believing in the omnipresence of the supernatural, should consider a number of its manifestations to be omens of death. One of the simplest of these is to hear the falling of a tree at a time when there is neither wind nor other reason to account for it. Such a fall is audible only to the person to whom it brings a warning of approaching death, to himself or to one of his relatives. A number of men may be in the forest togther, when one of them hears the crash of a tree, and notices that his companions are unaware of it; he realises that this is an omen and protects himself it by calling out:

"Let this evil react against whoever has been plotting evil against me."

The basis of this custom is the belief that someone has been practising black magic against the hearer, who, by this answer, is able to cause the sorcery to recoil upon the malefactor. Even more dangerous than to hear a falling tree, is to have one crash to earth close to a person. In the winter of 1921-1922 three Bella Coola were almost crushed in ~~this manner, and within a year the husband or wife of one, the~~

~~mother of a second, and the daughter of the third~~
this manner; within a year the deaths took place of the wife of one, the mother of a second, and the daughter of a third. The Bella Coola considered this to be definite confirmation of their belief.

When a chief dies, a supernatural woman, Skwanät'änä, "The Weeper", comes to earth to lament the loss. Crying piteously, she walks to and fro in the woods near the village where the death has taken place, but can be heard or seen only by a person ~~who~~ in whose family there will soon be a death. This can be counteracted by going boldly to her and collecting some of the clotted mucus that drips from her nose as she weeps. If this is wrapped in the finder's clothing and stored for a year,(1) it brings him good fortune and probably deflects the impending death. To see "The Weeper" without knowledge of the proper procedure is to court disaster. A prominent Bella Coola woman died in June 1922 and her son believed that he heard the lamentation of the supernatural visitor about six the ~~following~~ next morning in the woods behind the missionary's house. He rushed forth to find her, but was unsuccessful. Within a few days, one of his nieces died, as the Bella Coola expected.

A comparatively common bird in Bella Coola is the kwakwas, which is about the size of a robin, and dark, greenish-brown in colour.(2) Its whistle is frequently heard and no significance is attached to it. On the other hand, it is an omen of death if a kwakwas comes close to a house and calls out, "tsi't." When the writer was in Bella Coola, he was told that on the night of February twentieth 1924 one of these birds had called beneath the window of a man who was about to start on a journey in his motor-boat. Next morning, although the bird lay dead beside his house, he insisted on starting. He camped at Restoration Bay where he was awakened by a voice calling his name(3), but could see no one. (This was probably an owl, a bird which often foretells disaster by calling the name of the person to whom it will occur.) Even this did not deter him and within twenty-four hours his boat caught fire, his goods were destroyed, and

(1). See p.
(2). The bird could not be identified, although it belongs to fact, not mythology.
(3). Strangely enough, his white man's appellation.

~~1688~~

The Bella Coola regard he, himself barely escaped. Coincidences of this kind ~~are regarded by the Bella Coola~~ as ~~confirming~~ confirmation of their beliefs.

As in the last instance, death does not always follow the hearing or seeing of an omen; it may simply presage some ~~the Bella Coola consider its accuracy confirmed if a~~ disaster ~~ensues~~. It is dangerous for a person to be addressed by a dog, although it is well known that ~~animals~~ canines understand human speech and could talk if they so desired. It is believed that a dog spoke to a middle-aged Bella Coola woman a few years ago; ~~and although~~ she never told what it said, and although the ~~dog~~ animal was immediately shot, she was insane for several months and is ~~still considered~~ not ~~quite~~ yet normal.

The stone man, Yuyulmx, near Kimsquit, who figures so prominently in Bella Coola mythology is another death omen. In early times, all who passed his station used to call out to him, and it was thought that ~~anyone~~ those whom he failed to answer would die within a year. In the case, the voice was welcome, but the ~~talking~~ speech of an owl is still regarded with dread. If one of these birds ~~calls~~ utters the name of a dead person, the individual ~~so addressed~~ hearing this it will soon die.

The Bella Coola have not only these well recognised omens, ~~but~~ they also believe that any peculiar visitation or hallucination is a probable ~~prelude~~ cursor to disaster. It is obvious that in many cases these fears are unjustified, but there are always sufficient accidents and misfortunes to ~~confirm~~ corroborate their belief. ~~The writer remembers~~ An old Kimsquit ~~telling him~~ told the writer of the manner in which his son had once come rushing into the house saying that he had seen a strange, black-faced creature. His father ~~dreaded~~ feared that it might have been Sxaiaxwax; ~~xxxxxxxx~~

"Perhaps it was," continued the old man, "for my boy soon died."

Irrespective of the actual cause of death, ~~of~~ about which the father is uncertain, he is quite convinced that he knew of its coming by his son's omen-apparition.

Causes of Death.

The Bella Coola, like all other peoples, are well acquainted with the causes of death. They know that sickness, accident, wilful murder, old age, and a host of other

factors
~~following~~ may at any time terminate a man's life, but they consider that any one of these direct causes is only possible in conjunction with an indirect reason of a religious or supernatural nature. As described in a previous chapter, an ancient myth attributes historical
the ~~xx~~ origin of death to the stupidity of Raven(1), but this belief, even if its ac-
realm
curacy is accepted, belongs to the ~~xxxx~~ of philosophy and ancient history rather than to every-day life. When a ~~xxxxxx~~ canoe is capsized on the ocean and its occupants do not consider
drowned, the Bella Coola ~~realise that they have been drowned, but this does not appear~~
the drowning
~~in the light of~~ a mere accident: —— it is because Q̓omoqwa was hungry and desired human flesh. This indirect reason is quite as important as the direct cause. So, too, the death of a man beneath a falling tree or a land-slide is no accident; Sä·ʼtma caused the tree to crash to earth or the slide to roll downwards. Most Bella Coola believe that this supernatural being is responsible when an animal kills a hunter. He delights in death and always sits on a coffin before it is taken to the grave, although none but shamans can see him. Any ~~of the~~ supernatural being~~s~~ ~~are able to~~ can cause death, ~~though~~ but it must not be imagined that the Bella Coola go through life in a state of constant fear; death may vanquish them in the forests, but the probabilities are against it. Nor does sickness appear to them as a natural phenomenon. Its cause is either the intrusion of some foreign ~~xxxx~~ object into the body, or the weakness of one of the patient's supernatural elements. The ~~xxxxxx~~ only remedy in the latter case is an appeal to the supernatural, frequently through the medium of a shaman, whereas the former can often be extracted by a skilled practitioner. A disease of this type is often caused by the machinations of ~~axxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ sorcerer, and if death results it is attributed to the potency of his charms, not to a natural ~~xxxxxxxx~~ ailment. Even ~~the~~ ghosts ~~of dead people~~ are able to cause death. In war, one man may be able to kill an enemy, which have given him
but his success is accredited ~~xxxxxx~~ to his supernatural possessions ~~xxxxxxxxxxx~~ skill
rather
as a warrior than to his own ability. ~~It is probably correct to say that in every case of death the Bella Coola recognise an underlying supernatural cause.~~

It is felt that no ordinary explanation is sufficient to account for the death of a great chief. No matter what may have been the actual cause, it is always said

(1). See p. .

that the Supernatural Artisans, who in the beginning of time created mankind, came down and "seized" or "called back" the deceased, thinking him too good for this world. It is believed that these beings are keen hunters, and that Alquntam allows them to pursue influential people. This sentiment is always expressed in mourning songs for a dead chief but although accepted as a matter of fact, it is doubtful if it is more than a ritual expression, serving to comfort the mourners. The infraction of a taboo is another reason frequently given for a chief's death. It is said that before Potlas, there was a loud crash and the earth shook. He became ill immediately, and his stomach began to swell. He said that Sonx itself had fallen upon him, but the common belief was that he had erred in some ritual act. At any rate, his death occurred within a few hours.

The important fact is that the Bella Coola attribute death to supernatural, not to natural causes.

Rites Following Death.

News of a critical illness spreads rapidly through the village and the house in which the sufferer is lying becomes a rendez-vous for friends asking after his condition. Failure to do so would be considered ungracious, with the result that there is such a coming and going that rest is denied the patient. Shamans are called upon to practice their powers in a noisy manner, while female relatives weep and wail. The din is indescribable.

When the patient shows no further indication of life, the shamans cease to function, but the women redouble their cries. Relatives, friends and sympathizers all crowd into the house and begin to weep, often adding verbal lamentations. The news spreads from house to house and to progress by the wailings, as it is not necessary to be near the body to indicate sorrow in this way. Meanwhile the relatives are preparing the body, For a child, these services are performed by the parents; for a married man whose parents are dead, by his brothers and other kindred; for a married

woman, by either her husband or the members of her own family. If she has borne no children, it is customary for a woman's relatives to carry out the funeral rites, especially if she has been many times "re-bought" from her husband. If such repayment has not been made, it is considered quite proper for a husband to bury his wife, although it is a point of honour for her relatives to reimburse him later for his expenditure in connection with the obsequies. On the other hand, when children have been born and ~~xxx~~ financial assistance mutually given and received several times, it is proper for the husband to perform the funeral rites although he may receive assistance from his wife's kinsmen. There is no rigid ruling on the point but ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ bickerings seldom occur in connection with disposal of the dead. Members of the ancestral family are ~~always~~ ready to assist in ~~such~~ every a case, both on account of the disgrace which would follow a niggardly funeral, ~~but~~ and ~~also~~ as a means of displaying their wealth.

The first essential is to wash the body, a rite performed by men for a man, by women for a woman. It is immaterial who ~~performs~~ does this ~~rite~~ though some of the relatives usually volunteer ~~to do so~~. The most influential member of the immediate family takes the lead in the various ~~xxx~~ necessary acts, though there is always endless discussion, ~~mingled with~~ and advice from ~~the~~ ~~xx~~ members of the ancestral family and others interested. A nose-ring is placed in the septum of the corpse; if this is omitted, the body will not be able to dissolve into ~~xxx~~ its elements ~~and~~ but will range the earth as a walking phantom, causing injury to anyone who observes it. If ~~it should happen that~~ the deceased has just eaten some of the first run of Spring Salmon or olachen, ~~one of his friends rubs~~ a shaman washes out his ~~lips~~ mouth with a sponge of ~~dyed and~~ undyed cedar-bark ~~and~~ which he throws ~~xxx~~ ~~it on the fire.~~ into the river. ~~In this way~~ Thus the essence of the salmon ~~xxxxxxx~~ is extracted from ~~his~~ the body; if this ~~is~~ rite ~~not carried out~~ neglected, no more salmon ~~would~~ will come to the river. Once the food has passed through the bowels, this ritual is unnecessary. ~~It~~ is said that long ago, a ~~husband~~ man ~~used to~~ would hold intercourse with a ~~dead~~ deceased wife to indicate his excesive grief. neither husband nor wife touches a dead consort, though it

Many men prepare their coffins before death, but if this has not been done, one must be made ready. A large, wooden box ~~of the usual type~~ is required, which is provided by a kinsman of the deceased. The body is dressed in good clothing and bound into a squatting position, head between knees ~~and~~ hands clasped around ~~the~~ shins, and buttocks just above the level of the soles of the feet, In this

posture it is thrust within the coffin. Particularly if the corpse has been brought for some distance and rigor mortis has set in, it ~~is~~ sometimes may be necessary to break the back-bone and even to crush the skull before the box can be closed. A stone is placed on the back of the neck, within the coffin, to prevent the ghost from returning to haunt the survivors. A little choice food is placed ~~inside the coffin of~~ beside the body of a dearly loved ~~boy or girl~~ child for nourishment during the journey to the next world.

From this point onwards, the funeral rites differ according to the rank of the deceased. On the death of an influential sɩsaok, the senior members of that society meet ~~immediately~~ as soon as possible to arrange the dramatization of the coming of Mɩtlakila. A sɩsaok son, brother, or other near relative of the dead man is always present at such a meeting even if he ~~is~~ has little importance in the affairs of the society. If the death has taken place during the night, the meeting is held the following morning and the rites begin ~~at~~ at noon. If several ~~of the~~ people are absent, there is delay until all have gathered, but about ~~midday~~ the middle of the first ~~available~~ possible day two sɩsaok are sent up one of the mountains behind the village. They carry large, cone-shaped whistles ~~with them and~~ which they blow ~~these~~ twice. The sound is plainly audible in the village and all, whether or not members of the sɩsaok society, recognise that a supernatural being is drawing near. After a short interval, another whistle is blown by a sɩsaok concealed on the roof of the house in which the corpse is lying, and after another pause the same sound comes from within, beside the body itself. Most of the uninitiated know that this ~~sound~~ is the voice of Mɩtlakila(1), but even if unaware of ~~this~~ the fact, they realise that some supernatural, invisible visitor has arrived.

Heralds go from house to house, ~~and~~ sometimes to adjacent villages as well,(2) inviting the people to pay a farewell visit to the dead man who will soon leave them; in this invitation the sɩsaok name of the deceased is used. The guests assemble at once, irrespective of their rank or membership in the sɩsaok society. To mark their

(1). Also called Sixsixʼqwtnam.
(2). The Bella Bella are said to invite foreign guests ~~from abroad~~ to this ceremony.

grief, female relatives ~~of the deceased~~ pull out tufts of their hair, and both men and women of the immediate family cut their hair short. The body, either within its coffin or merely covered with blankets, is placed between the central fire and the back-room, immediately behind the place where the singers take their stations. When all are present, a son or other near relative who is also a fluent speaker, stands up and expounds how the Chief, ~~by which~~ meaning ~~term~~ Mɛtlakila, ~~is signified,~~ has come to visit the dead man, and how all should ~~we will~~ try to understand the song which he has brought.(1) A hidden sɛsaok has been blowing a whistle intermittantly, and the singers pretend to be able to understand the words of a song in its notes. In reality they have prepared in advance the new one which they now beat ~~a~~ out, ~~and~~ accompanied by ~~with~~ their voices. The theme either describes the coming of the supernatural ~~xxxxx~~ visitor, or recounts the number of potlatches given by the deceased, and the manner in which these will make smooth the ~~his~~ path ~~whither he is going~~ in the same way that distributed goods validate a chief's seat in this world. This song is practised and improved upon amid the booming of the whistle, as if the singers were constantly gaining new ideas ~~and improvements~~ and embellishments from the words of the supernatural visitor. ~~If~~ Sometimes a few incidents ~~from~~ are added from the sɛsaok myth ~~of the deceased. are added.~~ After several repetitions, a relative of the dead man asks the singers to beat out the latter's ~~his~~ sɛsaok songs, as many of them as ~~are~~ have been remembered from the time he was first initiated into the society. These ~~are~~ are given several times, ~~serving~~ both to recall ~~to the audience~~ the ceremonies in which the chief took part during his life. At intervals, the new song is repeated and sɛsaok members of the audience join in as they become familiar ~~acquainted~~ with the words. Frequently one or more relatives of the deceased dance in his stead during the singing. The details of this rite, ~~and~~ especially of the songs used at it, differ considerably according to the actions of the ~~dead~~ person during life. If ~~he had been~~ a mighty chief, the donor of many potlatches, this fact is described in the song, whereas only an incident from the ancestral myth can ~~usually~~ be used for a young sɛsaok. If some of ~~the deceased's~~ his female relatives are professional wailers, they function during the ceremony. Under all circumstances, the rite ~~serves~~ aims to ~~the~~ comfort the grieving ~~relatives, a purpose~~ kinsmen, and end which it usually ~~attains.~~ achieves.

As already ~~described~~ stated, sɛsaok ceremonial was in a state of transition at the time

(1). A mɛtlakila the people are present when it is sɛsaoking by whistling and/or thumping on the roof takes place.

of the coming of the white man. Previous to that date, a spectacular funeral prerogative had been ~~acquired through the marriage of a Tal io chief to a~~ adopted from Rivers Inlet ~~woman~~ (1) ~~and~~ which this has since been claimed by a number of sɪsaok. All the Bella Coola know of this ceremony, and most of them desire to perform it at the death of a dearly loved relative; at the present time this is possible owing to the slight regard paid to prerogatives, but it is certain that a few years ago it would have been forbidden to most people, and that it was never a universal Bella Coola rite.

When this ceremony is carried out, the corpse is allowed to remain in its coffin for at least one night after the day on which Mɪtlakila came and the sɪsaok songs were sung. Meanwhile the carpenters have prepared an imitation body, usually of rags on a wooden frame-work, and a wooden representation of the deceased's kwaltɪnta. ~~The essence of the rite is that~~ Since this figure comes through the roof and carries aloft the corpse, ~~so~~ ~~that~~ stout hooks are attached to ~~the~~ its feet. In theory, the bird or animal disguised used by the first ancestor of the deceased, traced ~~from father~~ patrilineally, should come for the body, but this is difficult to arrange in case of Whale, Bear and other marine or land mammals. ~~In~~ Consequently it has been customary to use only Raven or Eagle for this purpose, and it is assumed that at least one of these birds is present in the ancestral history of every individual as a result of the marriage of some of his forbears with a woman possessing one of these kwaltɪnta. (2) It is a common practice for an influential sɪsaok to prepare a figure of this kind during his lifetime and ~~warn~~ tell a son or other trusted relative where it ~~has been~~ is hidden; if this has been done, it obviates the necessity ~~of~~ for carpenters manufacturing one at short notice.

Several days are often required to complete these arrangements, but on the first evening possible, which may be two or three days after the death, the people are summoned to the dead man's house. The singers take their usual positions behind the fire and beat out the song used at the mourning ceremony already described. As on that occasion, they follow this with a number of the deceased's sɪsaok songs. Once more

(1). One old Bella Coola stated that this prerogative was obtained during his own lifetime from a Rivers Inlet chief who moved to Tälʼio. It is impossible to state accurately when this ritual was adopted by the Bella Coola though it is unquestionably of recent origin.

(2). The use of ~~only~~ Raven ~~and~~ or Eagle is probably a degeneration due to recent decay of custom.

they beat out the ~~recently~~ newly composed song and, as ~~it is~~ in the proceeding, ~~there is heard the~~ ~~weird~~ whistling is heard, accompanied by the squealing of an eagle or the croaking of a raven. These who are not members of the sisaok society do not understand that these sounds are produced by hidden members blowing ~~into~~ whistles on the roof. ~~Then~~ There is a crash on the ~~roof~~ plaza and, through a space opened by the removal of several boards, the face of the bird kwaitinta can be seen peering in. It is a dramatic spectacle and the audience gasps ~~appreciatively~~, especially those who see in it a manifestation of the supernatural ~~and an appreciation of~~ testifying to the importance of the deceased. If the stage management has been accurate, the figure appears at the termination of the song, but if it has arrived during the actual singing, the singers merely beat time slowly and cease to use their voices. The eagle, or raven, keeps squealing repeatedly and gradually ~~slowly~~ comes through the hole in the roof, ponderously and slowly, until its talons grip the "body." In the same gradual fashion it is carried upwards until, just before the burden disappears through the roof, one of the principal singers leads his fellows and the audience in calling out:

"Ye··", which has the significance of, "May you have a safe passage whence you came and whither you are going."

As soon as the bird has disappeared, its notes are heard from above, growing gradually fainter as the actors blow the whistles less violently. An eloquent sisaok stands up and expounds how the deceased's kwaitinta has come down from above to carry away his body, and often mentions incidents in the ancestral myth to explain why it was this bird that appeared. A young man is sent up to replace the roof boards and the hidden accomplices rejoin the audience unostentatiously. The corpse itself remains hidden in some back corner of the house where it was concealed at the time the dummy was seized, so that nothing indicates what has taken place.

It is necessary for the relatives to give presents to all who have witnessed this ceremonial prerogative. These are now distributed without regard to the rank of the recipient. Such gifts are not returnable and are said to be, "What has been Shaken Off," as if dust from the departing body. A meal, likewise provided by the relatives of the deceased, is next served, and as the people are eating it is

customary for the senior sɪsaok to make laudatory speeches, extolling the deceased and comforting the survivors by reminding them of the way in which he will be looked after ~~in virtue~~ of his ancestral traditions. This procedure may continue for several hours, and it is only when no one else wishes to speak that the people disperse.

It is not easy to comprehend the attitude of the Bella Coola towards this rite. Influential sɪsaok state emphatically that in former days it was possible to carry it out so realistically that the uninitiated were deceived, and never suspected that the actual corpse was later buried in secret by the singers, carpenters and ~~influential~~ sɪsaok. On the other hand, those who do not wish to emphasize the importance of this society, state that the deception was always apparent, and that even the hooks and ropes by which the figure was manipulated could be seen. Still others regard the ceremony as a ~~ritual and~~ symbolic means of portraying the manner in which a man's kwaɬɪnta comes to carry away his spirit and life. It seems clear that different interpretations must always have been accepted by different members of the community. A young and ingenuous uninitiated, steeped in the atmosphere of the supernatural, may well have believed that he was gazing upon an actual supernatural being, as the senior sɪsaok desired him to do. Others must have recognised that a deception of some kind was being practised, but dramatization is such an important factor in Bella Coola life that individuals often disregard the difference between semblance and reality, and it is contrary to custom for an individual to cast aspertions upon the prerogative of anyone else. It is easy for such an one to accppt the drama as a symbol or representation of the manner in which the kwaɬɪnta carries off the intangible elements of the dead. This is certainly the attitude of the Bella Coola at the present time. Everyone realises that the kwaɬɪnta is of human manufacture and that the corpse itself is not carried away, but the rite is still performed and gratifies the survivors by giving them an opportunity to display their prerogative and the cloak of the deceased's ancestor.

As already mentioned, this rite has been recently introduced to Bella Coola so that the details of performance have not become fully standardized. In some cases,

the kwaltinta is made to appear at the same time as Mitlakila, instead of at a subsequent ceremony as here described. It is assumed by the Bella Coola that the origin of the rite is ~~in~~ x some ancient myth ~~xxxxxxxxx~~ in which the body was actually taken above by the kwaltinta, an act ~~which was~~ copied, ~~by~~ with the aid of carpenters, by the descendants of the person to whom this ~~occurred.~~ ~~had happened~~, There are no myths of this nature current in Bella Coola although it is assumed that ~~they~~ such must have been common among the peoples of the outer coast to explain the ~~wide adoption~~ prevalence of ~~the~~ this practice in that area. One old Bella Coola mentioned ~~to the writer~~ that the Owiki myth in which a body became eagle down and was wafted upwards(1) is psychologically of the type which might serve as basis for a ~~custom~~ rite of this kind. If the descendants of the person to whom this ~~occurred~~ had had happened dramatized the incident at subsequent deaths, a custom analagous to the one here described would have arisen.

Disposal of the Body.

There is no fixed time for the disposal of a corpse. When possible, it ~~this~~ takes place ~~during~~ on the day following death, but if delay is necessary ~~owing to~~ for the ~~carrying out~~ performance of the rite ~~with a false body~~ just described, as many as four days may elapse. Another reason for postponement is the absence of near relatives; if ~~it is possible to summon them home~~ they can be summoned [illegible] until their arrival. within four or five days, the funeral may be delayed ~~for that period.~~ There is always endless discussion concerning the exact details; all relatives and members of the ancestral family take part though the wishes of a son, brother or other near ~~xxxxxxx~~ kinsman are usually followed. In this, as in so many points of Bella Coola ritual, an influential chief often overrules the desires ~~of even~~ even those who are more closely related to the deceased.

(2)

Heralds announce the hour chosen, usually about noon, and the people begin to assemble in the house of ~~the deceased,~~ death, even strangers being welcome. Women wail dolorously and another ~~evidence~~ indication of the sad occasion is the bundles containing clothing, cooking utensils, and other articles belonging to the dead person. The lid of the coffin has

(1). See p. done.
(2). This is ~~the case~~ at the present ~~time~~, even after the carrying away of the "body." In former times it was ~~not~~ practised except when the corpse was secretly buried by the s sack.

been left open but when everything is ready, an elderly man is asked to strike it, once, with a stone; then the lid is closed. Planks have been removed and a hole ~~has been~~ made in one of the front corners of the house, ~~on whichever side of the medial line the body happens to be lying,~~ through which ~~and~~ the elderly man throws the stone out ~~through this~~. The women redouble their lamentations as an old woman, previously asked to do so, ~~asked by the relatives of the deceased to perform the service,~~ lights a bundle of dyed and undyed cedar-bark and climbs through the hole carrying this. No request has been made for pall-bearers, but any strong men, especially friends of the deceased, ~~help~~ lift up the coffin and carry it through the hole.(1) If a dead person should be taken through ~~the~~ a door-way, ~~of a house,~~ others ~~anyone~~ using the same opening would soon follow the corpse to the next world. For the same reason, a body must never be moved across the central line of a house; the passage is therefore made ~~on whichever side~~ from the side ~~of the house the deceased~~ body happens to be lying when it ~~at death.~~ As soon as the corpse has been taken through, the planks removed ~~for the hole~~ are quickly replaced. Mourners and guests stream out through the doorway and follow the coffin, some of them carrying the bundles containing part of the goods of the deceased. Meanwhile the pall-bearers follow the woman with the torch to the cemetery, taking care to carry their burden so that it faces the direction in which they are going; if a dead person is allowed to look backwards, he ~~would~~ will beckon some relative to accompany him and the one so summoned ~~would~~ will soon die.

There is a cemetery near every village, usually ~~within~~ fifty ~~or~~ to a hundred yards behind the row of houses, in a place from which the heavy timber has been cleared. On arrival, the pall-bearers set down their burden ~~in any convenient spot~~ close to the spot ~~near~~ where the guide has placed her flaming bark on the ground. The personal possessions of the deceased are likewise deposited near the ~~flames~~ fire which ~~are~~ is kept alight by female relatives throwing on ~~them~~ it ~~xxx~~ small quantities of the dead person's clothing and utensils. The near relatives of the deceased ~~xxxx~~ choose the exact ~~spot for~~ site of the grave, which must never be dug before the bringing of the corpse. There is no ownership of plots within the ~~xxxxxx~~cemetery, so that the hole can be ~~excavated~~ made wherever desired. A favourite site is close to the grave of a mother, father, or other dear relative, but

(1) In former times it was frequently difficult to obtain pall-bearers for a slave a friendless person or a commoner on account of the taboos to which a person performing this service was subject.

this is optional. Bones are sometimes uncovered when digging, and that in ~~which~~ case earth is thrown in once more and a new site selected. There are no professional grave-diggers, nor are arrangements made in advance for men to perform this duty. Friends, especially strong young men, are willing to undertake the task and bring with them tools for the purpose. When the location has been chosen, they start their work without further instructions, taking care that the orientation of the grave is such that the corpse shall ~~will~~ face east. It is said ~~that~~ this is done because the sun rises in that quarter, ~~direction,~~ a statement ~~which xxyxhxxxxxxxxx is~~ probably a mere rationalization. Graves are usually about five feet ~~xxxxxxxx~~ deep, so that the digging requires some little time, especially in winter when the ground is frozen. All the young men are willing to help and relieve one another ~~whenever a digger becomes weary~~ at intervals. Meanwhile the women are squatting on the ground near the coffin, some of them throwing objects on the fire, and all wailing ~~at intervals~~ intermittently. This is ~~it is~~ a high-pitched, tuneless sob into which the mourner sometimes inserts words as if her agony had overcome her.

"Please return whence you came," moans one woman, while another sobs out:

"Perhaps you were unhappy with us and wanted something we could not give you on earth."

If the sun is the dead soul's ~~xxxxxxx~~, it is customary for the mourners to ~~x~~ address it, saying:

"Please increase your light to guide the way. Our child returns to you."

In some cases these doleful lamentations are more lip service, but they often express the very real grief felt at the loss of a friend or relative. It is also felt that such sympathy affords comfort to the mourning ~~xxxxxxx~~ kindred, an assumption which is correct.

As the grave grows deeper, the relatives keep measuring it and the coffin to ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ digging insure a close fit and avoid unnecessary digging. As soon as it is ready, an elderly man who has been requested to perform the rite, steps to the north side of the grave carrying a spruce bough in his hand. ~~With this he touch~~ ~~edge of the cavity, then, xxxxxxx moving his branch in a sun-wise direction,~~

The sun sent down the people of Sənxɬ and Snuʔɬeʔtɬ who accordingly regard that being as their ʔkwaɬtɛnta. Mourners of those villages, as well as other individualsto whom the sun stands in the same relationship, are accustomed to address him, saying,

"Please increase your light to guide the way. Our child returns to you."

One woman, whose relatives had been killed by jealous rivals owing to their success in giving potlatches, prayed:

"Come no more. Those for whom you gave light have gone, henceforth shine only whither they have departed."

In some cases such doleful lamentations are mere lip service, but they often express very real grief at the loss of a friend or relative. It is also felt that such sympathy affords comfort to the mourning ~~relatives~~ kindred, an assumption which is correct.

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an end, the opposite side and finally the opposite end. This circuit is repeated four times and the branch thrown away to the west. He touches with it the edge where he is standing, then, in sun-wise order, the east, south and west margins. This circuit is repeated four times and the branch tossed away ~~in a west~~ to the ward. ~~direction. The belief on~~ on a belief ~~which~~ this essential ceremony is based ~~is~~ that the lives of the grave-diggers have been drawn from them into the grave and are in danger of being pressed down by the coffin. Should this occur, they would have short lives. The spruce branch enables the lives to leave the cavity and return to their owners who suffer no ill effects. Anyone, other than a grave-digger, can perform this ~~xi~~ rite.

The coffin is now lifted into the grave, care being taken that the corpse faces ~~the~~ east. As already described, ~~the~~ a squatting position with buttocks almost on the ground. Boards have been prepared in advance and with these the grave-diggers make a roof-like covering, placing at each corner ~~of which is placed~~ a stone weighing from ~~or~~ to fifteen pounds. These are to prevent the ghost from returning to trouble the survivors. Earth is thrown in on top of the boards, and as it falls the wailing breaks out dolourously in a final crescendo of mourning. If a chief has been buried, his fellows sometimes sing a xa'tla song. At this time it is proper for one or more chiefs to rise and ~~make~~ speak. ~~speeches~~. No one is required to do so, nor is there any rule as to the order in which ~~they~~ ~~make their~~ remarks. ~~- - - - -~~ The first is usually a prominent man related to the survivors, seldom a son, or ~~brother~~ other near relative of the deceased. A speech is ~~gener~~ usually addressed in part to the spirit of the ~~deceased~~ dead person, telling it where ~~whither~~ to go; ~~and~~ in part, to the mourners. For a dead child, emphasis is laid on the fact that although ~~it~~ he ~~it~~ ~~did~~ died not live long enough to be incorporated ~~in~~ into ~~his~~ his ancestral myths on ~~this world~~ earth, ~~he~~ ~~it~~ will ~~be~~ do ~~this~~ in ~~his~~ his future home. In conclusion, an appeal is often made to Alquntam, under the name of Smaialotsa, to take pains that the spirit of the dead is given its rightful place in Nusmat'a, in the section where its first forbears were created, ~~and where~~ the spirits of its dead ancestors have returned since the beginning of time. The following speech was made by ~~the great-grandfather of the dead~~ an elderly Bella Coola chief at the funeral of his great-granddaughter in June 1922:--

"Granddaughter! (1) Go with your grandmother (2) to the mountain above Tcumotl where

(1). The term, slemts, was used although the child was really a great-grandchild.
(2). The grandmother had been buried two days previously.

my first (patrilineal) ancestor came to earth. Go to the mountain across the river where Qeit(1) descended; go to the north where your ancestor found a copper house with a Raven inside; go to the Skeena where another of your early ancestors found a whale; go to all the places where your forefathers experienced the incidents recorded in our myths; go and be happy.(2) I do not want these ever-recurring deaths in my family, but I am helpless. I hope that Siksiktam will cease hunting us."

Turning to the Carrier Indians who were present, the old man continued:—

"Thank you for coming twice to share our grief within two days."

Turning back towards the grave, he went on:—

"I have made ready the road for you.(3) Your grandfather(4) and I are grieved; our families became united when your parents married, and the bond was cemented by your birth. Now it is lost. When you were born, I rejoiced; now I am sorry. You are all right; you cannot fall because you are supported(5) by the names and fame of your father and mother, your grandfather and grandmother, your uncles and aunts, and your other ancestors who have passed away here in Qomqo'ts. You rest with them in your own village where is located your power from the experiences of your forefathers They will look after you and, being chiefs, they will be able to do so properly. May your sleep be good. I am heavy with grief. My grandchildren alone serve to anchor me to Qomqo'ts; otherwise I would go to Tsimot.(6) Now that you have gone I may become light-headed and depart. No. I have other grandchildren and great-grandchildren. I will bear up and be a man, and show myself the chief that I am by right."

During this speech the mourners remained seated on the ground, many of the women wailing at intervals and the men listening with more or less attention except those who were filling in the grave. Once or twice the speaker hesitated for a suitable word and suggestions were called out to him.

(1). One of the first people to reach this earth; see p. .
(2). The places and people mentioned were all described in the myths of the dead child's ancestral family.
(3). A reference to goods distributed by the speaker at a ceremony held a few days previously when it was certain that the child would soon die.
(4). The child's mother's father.
(5). Supported, kisianmotla, a word having the sense of physical support. The implication is that the deceased relatives are sitting in such a close circle that the pressure of their bodies is enough to prevent anyone of them, including the dead child, from falling.
(6). The home of the speaker's ancestral family.

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As the old man finished speaking and sat down, another chief arose.(1)

"Children," he said, addressing the parents of the dead child, "You have indeed suffered misfortunes. A few days ago, your mother (the mother of the dead child's father) died; today, your daughter. Perhaps it is all for the best. Remember how many ancestors who have gone before will be waiting to receive the child; she will be well cared for. Death ~~xxxxx~~ fears no one, chief nor commoner, but do not despair even at this double visitation. Your mother(3) never did an evil action to anyone, never said a harsh word to anyone; try to imitate her. See! I have neither father nor mother. They are both dead; we all go the same way."

In conclusion he urged the stepfather of the grieving ~~xxxxxx~~ father, husband of the woman who had died a few days previously, to bear up.

As the second speaker finished, a third arose and spoke briefly.

"I am sorry," he said,"for Joe (the mother's father of the dead child) in his grief today. We have put his granddaughter into the ground beside her grandmother, but it may all be for the best."(2)

There is no doubt that condolences of this nature assist the mourning relatives to bear up under their grief. This fact was emphasized by several Bella Coola, and in addition the writer was able to observe it on several occasions. They readily assimilate suggestions of any kind and undoubtedly derive comfort from the laudatory comments of influential chiefs.

Speeches of this general nature are always delivered as the grave is being filled in. Sometimes this work is finished before all who wish to do so have expressed themselves, sometimes the remarks are so short that they are ended before ~~xx~~ all the earth has been thrown back. When the hole has been filled to ground level, it is stamped down and the surplus earth scattered out of sight among the bushes, no mound being thrown up. ~~Sometimes boards are laid flat on the surface over the grave and xxxxxxx to reinforce the weighting below as a means of preventing the return of the ghost.~~ stones piled on these

Great care is always taken to prevent the return of the ghost. In addition to the

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(1). No arrangements had been made in advance concerning who ~~should~~ speak or the order in which they should address the mourners.
~~(2). The mother of the child's father had died a few days previously.~~
~~(3). Referring to the mother of the child's father.~~
~~(4). The mother's father of the dead child; he was addressed by his ancestral name on this occasion.~~
~~(5).~~ 2. It was impossible to record these speeches verbatim at the time of their delivery. ~~The writer was able to take~~ were taken at the time Notes, which were amplified by each speaker later telling ~~him~~ what he had said. Although lacking literal accuracy, the above may be considered correct in outline and typical of the sentiments expressed on such an occasion.

weighting with stones already described, other methods are used before the funeral party leaves the cemetery. Heavy boards are usually laid flat over the surface of the grave and ~~stones~~ needles piled on these~~ so that~~ to bar the ~~ghost will not be able to come~~ way up from below, ~~and raise through the earth~~. A further precaution is the setting upright of four stakes, one at each corner of the hole, and fastening ropes of cedar bark between them along the east and west sides of the grave. The significance of this is not fully understood, except that the strands ~~bar the return of the ghost~~ ghost cannot pass the. Four spruce saplings are cut and placed either between the grave and the village, or one on each side of the hole; their sharp needles form an effective barrier.

While these precautions are being taken, any clothing and utensils brought to the grave and not already consumed are thrown on the fire and allowed to blaze brightly. The ashes are never disturbed, being considered, in some vague way, "bad." The tools used for digging the grave are left standing upright in the loose earth, an action for which no explanation can be given by the Bella Coola. When these various rites have been performed, the funeral party returns to the village and disperses ~~without ado~~.

At ~~the~~ present, ~~time~~ interment is the customary method for disposing of the bodies of all except twins. ~~In~~ Formerly ~~times~~, other means were sometimes employed, as they still are occasionally. Instead of inhumation, a ~~corpse~~ coffin was frequently placed on a scaffold close behind the deceased's house. As other relatives died, planks were laid across above the first coffin, and the body deposited on these, so that in time the scaffold grew to resemble a house-like structure with many compartments. About fifty years ago a certain shaman, Āskānkots by name, is said to have pointed out that bodies were frequently carried off by wolves, snuq, and other animals. For this reason he persuaded the people to inter their dead.

Somewhat similar to this practice was the placing of corpses in trees. Until the last few years this was sometimes done with poor children; formerly, it was not unknown even for chiefs. ~~and~~ An elderly Kimsquit man mentioned that the coffin containing the body of his grandfather, a chief, was placed ~~in its coffin~~ in the crotch of a tree where no rain could penetrate. This means of disposal was probably never habitual. Even at the present time,